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NEW POEMS





# NEW POEMS

BY  
JOHN DRINKWATER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press Cambridge*  
1925

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*The Riverside Press*

CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



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I

FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

*What should we do but sing his Praise  
That led us through the wat'ry Maze, :  
Unto an Isle so long unknown,  
And yet far kinder than our own?*

ANDREW MARVELL

TO  
THOMAS HARDY



# NEW POEMS

## THE WITCH-BALL

[In some country places they hang up a blue glass ball as a charm against Witches.]

NEVER, oh, never came  
Witch in this garden.  
We would not pardon,  
Would we, dear, anyone  
Who should say things were done,  
Such as in hell they name,  
Here in our garden?  
Never was poison-root  
In this Hesperides  
Girdled by gentle trees;  
Mould that our lilies made  
Mothered no nightshade;  
Never passed Endor's foot  
Over so smooth a green  
Lawn as is laid between  
Borders that virtue  
Only can print,  
Of pansies and mint,  
With no herb to hurt you.  
Here where the thrush and jay,

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

Robin and linnet,  
Find through the longest day  
Songs for each minute,  
No path or plantation  
Ever has heard  
Vext incantation  
With song of the bird;  
Never a muttered spell  
Learnt in the writ of hell,  
Psalter obscene,  
On warlock or witch's lip  
Whispered in stewardship  
Curst and unclean.  
The day and the night  
Are holy, all hours,  
With heaven alight  
Again in the flowers;  
All blossoms by day  
Flashing back to the sun  
Many beams to repay  
The succour of one;  
All blossoms, when sweet  
Stars of even have birth,  
Lying orb'd at our feet,  
Pale planets of earth,  
And, chaste beyond whisper  
Of sorcerer's rune,  
Moon-virgin when Hesper  
Is lost in the moon.

## THE WITCH-BALL

Go, comrade, go, lover,  
Go pass through the portal,  
Laugh and rest, till your mortal  
Date falls as it must  
To the gospel of dust,  
And the dark wing shall cover  
The sun from our portal.  
Till then laugh and rest,  
While the garden shall keep  
All charms that are best  
For fortune and sleep;  
Clean rites to deliver  
Roof-timber and stair  
And hearthstone for ever  
From plagues of the air.  
No witch may come nearer  
Than pass down the lane,  
A fugitive peerer,  
An impotent bane;  
No kirtle of devil  
May dip from the night,  
Our lintel with evil  
To brush in its flight.  
Here melody lives,  
The spirit burns purely,  
And what the year gives  
We harvest securely.  
Still shall the blue witch-ball  
Hang from the parlour-beam,

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

Catching the garden-gleam  
Globed from the window-pane,  
Marking our steps again  
As in the room they fall;  
A far little world of dream,  
Still it shall hang by day,  
Still it shall hang by night,  
Just for the eye's delight,  
Just as a story told,  
Just as a fear of old,  
Gathered away;  
And never shall haunted  
Breath cloud in the glass  
The little enchanted  
Long alleys of grass,  
And birds of sweet lustres,  
And gathering bees,  
And blossoms in clusters,  
And orcharded trees,  
All mirrored in flame  
From our acre of light,  
Where witch never came  
From fogs of the night.

## EGYPT AND THE CROMWELL ROAD

A BEGGAR walked in front of me,  
In ribboned rags, disastrously;

Mopping the puddled rain with pads  
Long worn in guttered Iliads.

Halting, with eyes downcast, intent  
Upon the splashing stones he went.

He heard me, and with lifted head  
Waited my coming, as I said,

To ask an alms; but, as he turned,  
His eyes with distant glory burned.

He did not ask an alms; he held  
A finger up, and I was spelled.

He did not ask an alms; he said,  
‘The ancient honours all are sped.

‘The ancient honours all are gone  
That founded Rome and Babylon.

‘These rags were once Arabia’s boast;  
I was a king, and am a ghost.

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

‘The lifting of my hand was doom;  
In Egypt they have found my tomb.’

He went, a beggar-man again,  
Into the shadows and the rain.



## CHRISTMAS EVE

ON Christmas Eve I lay abed,  
With the still night more still  
For all the pluming snows that spread  
Along our sparkling hill;  
And while again to Jesu' stall  
Walked wisdom from afar,  
I heard another shepherd call  
Under the Christmas star.

Along the lane his carol came,  
But not of Bethlehem;  
A burning boy, he knew a flame  
But not the flame of them:  
'This Christmas Eve from courting home  
I am a bachelor,  
But soon the snows again will come,  
And I'll be wed before.'

All one with kings from Bible-page,  
And holy shepherds old,  
Went yeoman love in pilgrimage  
Across the Christmas wold.  
'Good-will,' he sang, 'Good-will, Good-will,'  
Or seemed to me to sing,  
While some glad girl beyond the hill  
Dreamt of a new-born king.

## APPROACHING ELSINORE

TO-MORROW I shall be at Elsinore.  
When by the Thames there was no song to sing  
They say that he some time the buskin wore  
In Denmark, and was Player to the King.  
Of men the living habitation still,  
The very stones and turrets I shall see  
That he remembered once, and set the quill,  
And the words came — 'Who's there?' —  
    'Nay, answer me.'

So Avon plied in royal usury,  
Borrowed a scene and gave a world again,  
Adding a tragic immortality  
To the imperial story of the Dane,  
That in all kingdoms now, for ever more,  
Hourly the play begins at Elsinore.

## NORTHWARD

INTO a bleaker day than we have known  
All winter fallen on our London streets,  
Belovéd, for a little while alone  
I have stept where the north wind beats.

Is it the north? Is it the arctic chill,  
Zones of the frosted night upon my mouth?  
If you, belovéd, were beside me still,  
Should I know the north from the south?

## DISTANT MUSIC

FAR now from you, dear love, I know  
How well you build from bow and strings,  
Framing the melodies that flow  
From your belovéd minstrel kings.

But now the strings are mute, your hands  
Are still, the bow is laid aside:  
I see you searching out the lands  
Whence love beats back to you full-tide.

And standing so you are the birth  
Of all the themes that you awake;  
Brahms and Beethoven bade the earth  
Blossom in music for your sake.

Now falls your phrasing from afar,  
Telling how they divined of old —  
You cease, and on the moment are  
The cause of all that you have told.

## CONDITION

If one to love you better came,  
The paradise within my heart  
I would surrender to that flame,  
And unlamenting would depart.

Till then undaunted I'll embrace  
My fortune, asking no man's leave,  
And pledge you in the market-place,  
And wear your favour on my sleeve.

## WHEN SLEEP DELAYS

WHEN sleep delays, yet thought is but a sorrow,  
row,

You come in your dear image of the day,  
Name of my ease, redemption of the morrow,  
My shepherd's way.

Sweet visiting ghost, all's well. My midnight  
now

All gentleness I'll keep till the sun's rising,  
Knowing that then a dawn will bless my brow  
Of your devising.



## FELICITY

'FELICITY, come stay awhile,  
And talk with me, you pretty maid.'  
She glanced at me, a girl of guile,  
And she went running down the glade.

I stirred the embers on the stone,  
I sprinkled rushes on the floor,  
I took my pen to write alone, —  
And she was tapping on the door.

## HEED NOT THE BIDDING VOICES

HEED not the bidding voices,  
O Poet, as you sing,  
And as the bird rejoices  
Go yet on errant wing,  
For the laurels of occasion  
Are bitter to the brow,  
And the harvest of persuasion  
Is black upon the bough.

## SIR EGLAMOUR'S FAREWELL

BECAUSE you bid me go, and set aside  
All that our love had been,  
The praise, the dedication of a bride,  
The kingdom of a queen —

I go, too proud to question. But I'll wear  
No favour riding forth —  
All words of poor compassioning forbear —  
Enough! I know my north.

## A GHOST SPEAKS ON THE STYX

I COULD not think that Time was old,  
So freshly did he wear  
His colours as the years were told,  
When I was walking there.

He knew no sad mortality  
Of promise or regret,  
Forever in virginity  
Of joy Time's times were set.

Now on your river from the shades,  
Boatman, a rumour comes  
Of one whose garland never fades,  
For all his martyrdoms.

They call him Love; they chant his rhyme  
Even in Acheron;  
They call him Love — but he and Time,  
You ferryman, are one.

# AN APPEAL FOR SAINT GEORGE'S HOSPITAL IN LONDON

THE PRESIDENT: H.R.H. PRINCE GEORGE

## I

HARD here in London  
I have seen  
The first buds coming  
Of April green,  
In the dark tree  
Of a London square  
Have watched the nesting  
Pigeons pair.

## II

Saint George is a fighter,  
His arm is fear  
Where England's foemen  
Lift the spear;  
The dragons know him,  
And men who die  
For England, 'Saint George  
For England!' cry.

## III

But still as a child,  
All joy and pity,  
Little Saint George  
In London city

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

Wanders alone,  
And childlike stares  
At pigeons building  
In London squares.

### IV

Great Saint George  
With lance in hand  
Guards all days  
Our fatherland,  
But little Saint George  
Is charity,  
He binds the wounds  
Of the wounded; he  
Says, 'Sick man, sick man, take your ease,  
Mend in sight of the London trees  
Where pigeons mate and softly coo  
As deep in the distant woods they do.'

### V

Friends, who hold  
Your wealth and peace  
Because Saint George  
Withouten cease  
Touches your latch  
Each night that falls,  
And waits, and waits,  
Till England calls —



## SAINT GEORGE'S HOSPITAL

Because he stands  
In your defence  
All armed and bright  
In diligence,  
Remember, too,  
The little Saint  
Who asks your alms  
For men who faint  
Because the tumult  
Drags and sears,  
For hurt men crying  
To him who hears,  
To little Saint George  
To give them ease  
Where the pigeons build  
In London trees.

### VI

Great Saint George  
Our name defend,  
Little Saint George  
Be pity's friend,  
While we with George  
The Prince have care  
Of charity's house  
Where the pigeons pair.

MISSOLOGHI, APRIL 19

1824-1924

WHEN song was worn, and misery was old,  
And equal fellowship a fading theme,  
The ardours of desire untimely cold,  
Lonely in fame, unpurposed as a dream,  
With every sharp and bitter savour tasted  
Of love's unthrift and greedy widowhood,  
With summer in miscounted winter wasted,  
Seeking redemption the redeemer stood  
Armed at the gates of Greece; to Greeks he  
gave  
Our west, a challenge, substance, his renown;  
From Greeks he learnt a clarion cause, to save  
Honour that, risen anew, to death went down  
Lovely at last, for evermore to be  
Whispered along the Cephalonian sea.

II

A hundred years are gone, and yet are near  
The ebbing hours of that last pilgrimage,  
And out of Missolonghi comes the clear  
Shape of a sorrow that the Attic stage,  
Divinely pitying pity so divine,  
Had not disdained to crown with tragic song,

MISSOLONGHI, APRIL 19

Setting that larger continence to shine  
Above the tale of unremembered wrong.  
And still we need in our mortality  
Such Attic vision on so fair an end,  
That Byron still, no blemish more, may be  
Friend of the Greeks, and of our England  
    friend,  
His penance done, his quarrels reconciled,  
Knighthood at last of his immortal Childe.

ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THOMAS  
HARDY'S *FAMOUS TRAGEDY OF THE  
QUEEN OF CORNWALL*

*Dorchester, November 30, 1923*

LONG years ago on Cornish land  
A King, his Queen, and her lover true  
Lived out a luckless tale,  
And the Breton maid surnamed White-  
                    hand;  
And ever the old years yet are new,  
And the story does not fail.

It does not fail. Abroad in the south  
Is news again of these that made  
Love grieve in the dawn of time;  
A poet has touched the dumb dead mouth  
Of every one, and shade by shade  
They steal upon his rhyme.

O luckless love of so little date;  
O happy love so long to abide  
For men to praise and weep;  
O happy world where bitter fate  
Is sweetened thus of all its pride  
In song before we sleep.

## AN ENTRY FOR EDMUND GOSSE'S LIBRARY CATALOGUE

'UNCUT. The Rare First Issue.' Let  
Who will deride our tremulous  
Fond joy when on our sheet we set  
The latest of our honours thus.

We do not argue. But we know  
Not vain the charms nor fugitive  
That freshly from the numbers flow  
When on their primal page they live.

Here is the gentle chronicle  
Of all such virtues in your mind;  
Yet here, for all we know it well,  
One little book they shall not find.

It is of old affection writ,  
Of courtesy that counted not  
The severing years; the theme of it  
Has never known design or plot.

'Mint copy. Perfect.' And when age —  
(So the Great Printer shall I thank) —  
From 'Finis' turns the final page,  
We shall not find the verso blank.

## 1914-1918: THE DEAD SPEAK

In the earth, in the seas, we remember;  
We dead, we are awake;  
But bitterness we know not  
Who died for beauty's sake;  
We have no need of honour,  
No quarrel we recall,  
The lies, the little angers —  
We have forgiven all.

In the earth, in the seas, we remember;  
We dead, a myriad name;  
But not among our legions  
Is any word of blame;  
We gave, and there an ending  
Of covenants gone by,  
We ask no funeral splendour  
Who were content to die.

In the earth, in the seas, we remember;  
We dead, your length of days;  
But still the stealth of darkness  
Makes one of all delays —  
A year, or ten, or twenty,  
How little then the cost —  
Fear not, we have forgiven  
The little years we lost.

## THE DEAD SPEAK

In the earth, in the seas, we remember:

We dead, your daily debt;

The old heartbreak is over,

But we remember yet —

Is earth a sweeter temple

Because we let you live?

Or do you still betray us,

That we may not forgive?

## WE MOTHERS KNOW

'PEACE,' they have said.

Though the sad profit of our pain

We grieve till time is gone,

We shall not learn to build again

The bricks of Babylon —

Our sons are dead.

Stilled are the guns.

Good-will, they say, shall heal, shall bless

The lands now, year by year —

But though the merciful possess

The earth, they shall not hear

Our little sons.

They were our friends;

Our thought, our breath, our blood we gave

To make them so;

They bought us peace, and in the grave

Is all the peace they know,

To make amends.

Leaders and lords,

Who in your pride decree that thus

Or thus shall scores be paid,

An age is building when with us

Your reckoning shall be made,

Who have no swords.



## WE MOTHERS KNOW

We mothers know;

By the world's hearths we sit and dream;

Again we watch them die;

They willed the peace that you blaspheme,

And, though you still deny,

It shall be so.

TO A POET ON HIS EPITAPH FOR THE  
FALLEN

SPLENDIDLY dying, yet their fame  
Had fallen to imperious time,  
But for the living lips that came  
To save their splendour in a rhyme.

## THE HERESY OF AN ELDER ON NOT BELIEVING IN FAIRIES

I DON'T believe in fairies; —  
I've something else to do,  
Believing that behind the clouds  
The sky is always blue,  
That every day at half-past one  
It's nearly half-past two.

I don't believe in fairies,  
Because my Uncle James  
Transcendentalised about them,  
And told me of their games,  
While he never saw the flying birds,  
And didn't know their names.

I don't believe in fairies;  
I think that lazy men  
Who think the sunshine commonplace  
Invented them, and then  
Forgot that it is wonderful  
That five and five make ten.

I saw the lambs at Whitsuntide,  
And a bullfinch in a tree,  
I saw a mushroom in the mist  
And dolphins in the sea, —

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

I don't believe in fairies,  
But these are faith for me.

Clear are the stars and the thrushes' eggs  
For tidy hearts to find,  
And I think that fays and lepracauns  
Are slatterns of the mind,  
And if I ever meet one  
I shall know that I am blind.

## THE ATOM OF GOD: A VISION

(TO G. C. D.)

SUPPOSE that God, being a busy God,  
With myriad-million acres to be trod  
Hourly in tending his vast globed estate,  
Globe upon globe, convolved, immensurate,  
Old crumbling worlds for pardon, or repair,  
Or dissolution; new worlds on the air  
Cooling from vapour, nebulous cores to bind  
With solid zones; new balances to find  
In his dominion where the long tides go  
Of spheres through space in endless ebb and  
    flow,  
Matter now locked, congealing, and now free  
To range again fields of infinity;  
New rhythms to win from the uncompassed  
    void,  
New surmise in the task to be employed  
Of moulding chaos, and setting with sure hand  
Amid the multitudes of his command  
The thing so moulded; say that, as he went,  
This God so thronged with far omnipotent  
Affairs, one æon'd morning, to fulfil  
His starry missions, caught, as poets will,  
A sudden brooding fancy of some far  
Dim secret locked, unguessed, in every star  
That knew him, nor revolted, yet, so played  
God's fancy on the host that he had made,

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

Might own some law, some nature, that his  
mind,

Rapt in creation, had not stayed to find,  
Though he of all commanding had the source  
Devised, the mass, the nature, and the course.  
Intent upon his task, he let the mood  
Go by, and still the labour was renewed  
Of crowded mind on teeming circumstance,  
And law to quell the mutinies of chance.  
But when God rested, then the thought re-  
turned,

And beat upon his mind, and something  
burned

Of curious will to fathom what might be  
Deep, deep in universal power. 'I see  
World upon world obedient, as I bid  
Cast in huge balance on my space, amid  
Motion of worlds I yet must number, given  
One time, one order, and one way through  
heaven.

I set my seasons, fixt in their control  
Of moving patterned light upon the whole  
Body of being under me. I hear  
Sweet sounds of mighty volume spun from  
sphere

To axled sphere harmoniously scaled.  
Beauty is ever with me, and unstaled.  
And so my enterprise, my dreams of still  
Process more proud to magnify my will,

## THE ATOM OF GOD: A VISION

More song, worlds vaster, laws more excellent,  
Numbers for my delighted government  
Yet in their starry millions multiplied.  
All this is well; I made it, and I guide  
Its various motion, happy. But I leave  
Too long one cause uncertain while I weave  
My story out. This matter that I bring  
Into so sure a shape and compassing,  
What is it? How in central atom framed?  
How built the energy that I have tamed  
Into this chiming order? What the might  
Gathered from swarming chaos to the light,  
And infinitely banded to fulfil  
The unbounded time of my creating will?'  
Stars beckoned, and God's speculation stayed.  
But, pausing first, he lent a seven-day'd  
Labour to fetch the answer that he sought  
For this perplexed brief interval. He wrought  
Earth, and the things of earth, and man; and  
                  swung

This little globe appointedly among  
The globes of his uncounted industry,  
Declared its orbit, gendered it to be  
Active and tided by the common flow  
Of inescapable law, and, leaving so  
This moment of invention universed  
In destiny among the stars, he first  
On man so moulded laid his bidding thus —  
'Go, child of God, in one thing prosperous,

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

That of my good, unveiled, purpose, one  
Thing hidden is for your unveiling. Sun  
And moon and friendly stars are with you set  
For knowledge, and sweet climes and foliage  
met

And fellowships for comfort on your way;  
And that you shall not fail in sloth, this day  
Have I made sorrow in your shadow, friend,  
To keep you fresh in constancy, and lend  
Ardour and indomitable power  
To this your quest, my quest. Answer my  
hour

Of speculation for me. Still, with mind  
Established in the beauty you shall find  
Aiding on earth, go on till all is told  
Of this that even from me my atoms hold,  
Secret, unmeasured.'

So, our fable tells,  
The mood ordained when earth so dawned,  
that dwells

Still at the centre of man's enterprise,  
'Till all is told.' Not less than in God's eyes  
The congregated systems of his plan,  
Is earth dominioned mightily to man.  
And as God's vision broods upon the whole  
Design innumerably spread, the soul  
Of man is rapt upon the earth that glides,  
His habitation, through the stellar tides.  
Nor is man's bounded consecration less



## THE ATOM OF GOD: A VISION

Than God's unbounded. And as all things confess

Through firmamental space God's mastery  
In moulding, so man fixes his decree  
On grain and mass and season and sap of  
earth,

Framing fresh lovely argosies from birth  
Till death; great bridges flung astride  
Loud waters; swift and lonely ships to ride  
Waste oceans, towers and bells, altars and  
tombs,

Engines of flight, and wheels, and windowed  
rooms

With hearths, and beds, and beams — all at  
his will

Shaping from forge and crucible and mill,  
Matter no less commanded than by God.

And as the long and difficult paths are trod  
Of all his labour, ever, for a sign

Of his dominion, on his annals shine,

All pure, all uncommitted, things of art:

Music and verse; orisons of the heart

Figured in stone and marble; shapes that  
sing,

Dropt from the brush, their coloured gospel-  
ling.

And grief, and loss, and doubt, and bitter  
change

Are with him, that his purpose shall not range

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

In mere delight irresolute, content  
To fade from thought into an indolent  
Drifting of nebulous mood; and still to keep  
His diligence firm, establisht, he must reap  
His patient year, nursed on to festival,  
Or to his body's shame untimely fall.  
So labours man, and even as God compels  
His starry textures, man the master dwells  
On earth, compelling also in his kind.  
But as that fleeting fancy of God's mind  
In the beginning of man was fixt to be  
In man his urge, his aim, his constancy,  
So ever in his faring as he goes,  
Unwearied in discovery, he knows  
One fierce complaining clarion of desire,  
One siege unresting; moulding earth and fire.  
Leading the waters, harnessing the wind,  
Bringing the unperceived, the undefined,  
To scale and measurement, he seeks, he seeks  
The last arcanum; still the challenge speaks  
Over the vast of years, and still he broods,  
Not as God, walking in his solitudes,  
A moment, once, but age by kindling age,  
Unceasing, incorruptible, his wage  
But lonely consecrations of the soul —  
Crying, 'This heat, this might that I control,  
This matter that I bind, this fluid speed  
Obedient to my rod, this planted seed  
That knows my husbandry, this blood and bone

## THE ATOM OF GOD: A VISION

That of my generation come and own  
My governance of spirit — what are these?  
What life in the far central fastnesses  
Lies poised in huge momentum? What the  
word,  
The touch, the lodestar of release? Come, gird  
Your resolution, Man, on with the quest,  
Your quest, of God's commanding.'

. . . . .

Manifest

Little by little on the ages grew  
The knowledge of man's dedication. New  
Process on process dwindled or prevailed.  
Old alchemies went by, old prophets failed,  
Old revelation to denial bowed,  
While patient and undaunted still the proud  
Brain to its last fulfilment laboured on,  
Fulfilment and unfolding. Æons gone,  
And æons, came the long, the appointed day;  
God's thought, arrested on his starry way,  
A moment earthward turned, and there beheld  
Man's lifted finger fall, and from the cell'd  
Centre of being strike the primal beam;  
And, sounding through the universe, a gleam  
Shot volted, blinding all the multitude  
Of stars, that even God trembled where he  
stood,  
As the unfolded mystery, divined  
Of man, was gathered to the eternal mind.

## FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE

And where earth was, now, drifting into space,  
A smear of dust was all. God turned his face,  
And moved again creating, through the wide  
Realms of almighty purpose, satisfied.

. . . . .  
So runs the fable out. The hearth is cold,  
The lamp is flickering with our story told,  
The candle on the stair calls us to sleep,  
To-morrow shall have other tales to keep.  
Let dreams be as they may, the dawn will  
bring

Again the bright, the happy birds to sing,  
Fresh flowers unfolded, friendship at the gate,  
Old faith for pilot on the tides of fate.

II  
FROM THE GERMAN

TO  
D.  
I. R.  
E. R.

## NOTE

THESE verses were the footing I paid for a summer holiday in Southern Germany, when for the first time I found in being the towns of the fairy-tales, one of the literary forms in which the modern world seeks in vain to rival the old. Also, in Stuttgart and Heidelberg and Frankfort and Marbach I was in the land that gave birth to much of the best German poetry. This, in mere carelessness, I had always vaguely supposed to be eloquent and rather heavily thoughtful, such as the French critic had in mind when he said that thoughtful poetry didn't make him think, it made him sweat. Now, under friendly guidance, I discovered how mistaken I was; that the German lyric, even when it is on a philosophical errand, can move with as light and distinguished a grace as any French *madame* or English cavalier. The German muse, in short, was the very companion for holiday humour, and made a very agreeable fifth to our party of two Australians, an Austrian and an Englishman.

The friendly guide was Dr. Eduard Reichmann, who would read a German poem over to me and explain it, until I had got its sense and sound into my mind. If I then found it attractive for my purpose, he would supply me with

## NOTE

a word for word translation, I being careful not to let him exploit his knowledge of English too freely, being anxious to get from him nothing but crude pointers, leaving the search for exact words until I was writing my verses. After the literal meaning had been made clear, we worked over the precise metrical form, and then I was left to myself. The principles I worked on were these:

A translation of a poem should, it seems to me, have one clear aim; to produce such a work as the original poet would have written in the same mood and with the same thought if his language had been that of the translator's purpose instead of his own. Above all, the translation of a poem should be a poem.

First, as to the content matter. Clearly, the essential significance of this must be preserved; clearly, also, this significance must be presented by the same general device as is employed in the original. But the detail of this device may, it seems to me, sometimes be modified without offence. For example, in Uhland's lovely little masterpiece of witty sentiment, the literal meaning of the German in my third line of the second stanza is, 'No-one bit my cheeks.' Liberties of this kind as to the sense of the poems I have allowed myself, but no others that I am aware of; beyond an



## NOTE

occasional redistribution of the meaning into different lines of a poem, as in Goethe's 'Wanderer's Night Song,' where the sense of my first four lines covers that of the first five of the original, and of my last four lines that of the last three of the original. These renderings mean poetically, I believe, precisely in English what their models mean in German, but I have made no concessions to the pedantry that greets every translation of the classics, for example, with an exhibition of classic nonsense.

Secondly, as to the form. I have nothing here to do with the angry problem of matching languages that have radically different metrical geniuses. I have not to decide, as Pope had, whether the proper English equivalent for Homeric hexameters is blank verse; though I think he was right. The forms of German verse correspond for the most part with our own. I think that once or twice I have substituted one common arrangement of line length for another, which I could do without apology, since every poet knows that his choice between one and another of these is more often than not arbitrary. Also I have discarded the German light ending rhymes when it was convenient, because the natural practice of German in this matter becomes tiresome if freely indulged in English; moreover, their light ending is not the

## NOTE

same thing as ours. But I have generally been scrupulous as to the reproduction of form, as of meaning; and particularly so when the form is unusual and closely personal, as in the Goethe piece already mentioned and Eduard Mörike's intricate philosophical lyrics.

In conclusion, I cannot refrain from giving myself the pleasure of saying that Dr. von Hofmannsthal, who is the only living poet represented in this little collection, and who knows English with almost idiomatic intimacy, has been generous enough to give a more than cordial approval to my version of his poem, and leave to use it as I like.

## PRELUDE. THE POET

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

(1759-1805)

STILL fragrant of the spring for ever,  
While times and generations fade,  
The wreath of laureate endeavour  
Blooms in the song the initiate poet has  
made;

Ancestral virtue still unsleeping  
He tends for kingdoms yet to be,  
And incorruptibly is keeping  
The gates of immortality;  
And through the poet still is given  
The rarest recompense of heaven.

## SPRING

JOHANN CHRISTIAN GÜNTHER  
(1695-1723)

SHY little one, Elysium's here,  
So rest; the west wind in the lime  
Is musical; no care is near  
These woods and meadows of the prime;  
Where garlands of our solitude  
Back to the pebbled water sing  
No peering malice may intrude  
Upon the happy rites of spring.

Your discipline of cloistered youth,  
The virgin promise of your breast,  
Are pretty snares whereby in truth  
I am love's minion confessed;  
Fear not the touch of my desire,  
But in your bosom let it play,  
Till you, sweet novice, shall aspire  
To yet more absolute a sway.

Why is the colour in your cheeks?  
Nay, nay, I wrong you not, I swear;  
Love has his paradise, and seeks  
Your innocence and beauty there;  
In faith, your captive though I be,  
Follow my wit, and you shall find

## SPRING

How prodigal a lord is he  
In resolution to be kind.

The earth is all fertility,  
Her paramours your doctrines are,  
Your parables to profit by,  
How love is joy's familiar;  
Why are we met beneath our lime?  
How was the purpose of our birth?  
Who tells the processes of time  
Elected us for lover's mirth?

## BELINDA

JOHANN LUDWIG WILHELM GLEIM

(1719-1803)

THE last seduction of her dress  
Was loosed. Behold! Belinda's maiden treasure

Naked and lovely to the breezes' pleasure,  
Refiguring Ida's wantonness.

Ah me, from that divine caress,  
My sudden joy, my tribulation's leisure,  
From all that secret loveliness,  
My term of Eden's torment must I measure.

Weak with desire, bemused, (ah, woe to hear!)  
In one bright summer noon of admiration  
I took the wage of many a wrathful year.  
You that a little care for your salvation,  
Never (alas! I tell you) let the dear  
The fatal venom be your youth's temptation.

## ROSETTE

HEINRICH CHRISTIAN BOIE

(1744-1806)

STILL upon her glances waiting,  
Still desiring, supplicating,  
Vainly to Rosette I plead —  
'Must I in eternal trial  
Know the fury of denial?  
Pity my so constant need!'

Still austere, still unbending,  
Nothing my occasion mending,  
Cold and fair Rosette replies —  
'I would clasp in sweet submission,  
But that hope is love's condition,  
And in conquest passion dies.'

## MY CHASTE MISTRESS

AUGUST BÜRGER

(1748-1794)

WHEN I too sweet an ardour press  
Upon my saint's condition,  
So pitiful is her distress,  
I straight am all contrition.

If suddenly within me move  
The angels of temptation,  
She tells me lust is lack of love  
And weeps for my salvation.

So in the difference of kind  
Our young delight must smother —  
O Love, some sweet conversion find  
At least of one or t'other.

Hereafter my desires be cold  
With saints and gospel-spinners,  
Or let the time in her behold  
Its paragon of sinners.



## WANDERER'S NIGHT SONG

JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE

(1749-1832)

PEACE, on the hills forsaken,  
Is deep;  
The leaves unshaken  
Are asleep;  
By twilit nest  
Stilled is the wood-bird's tune;  
Hush, heart! You soon,  
You, too, shall rest.

## DEPARTURE

LUDWIG UHLAND

(1787-1862)

So am I from the town departed  
Where long it was my lot to dwell,  
And I am on my way stout-hearted  
Though none were met to say farewell.

No surging crowd with fond caresses  
Has torn (thank God) the coat I wear,  
Nor are my lips bruised by the kisses  
Of inconsolable despair.

The townsmen did not turn in sleeping  
As I went out at crack of day —  
Well, let them damn well sleep — my  
weeping  
Is but for one who stayed away.

## TO HIS ABSENT MISTRESS

NIKOLAUS LENAU

(1802-1850)

THIS rose I pluck in exile, dear,  
Ah, would that I might be  
But now the happy messenger  
To carry it to thee.

But ere my zealous touch were laid  
Upon thy latchet far,  
My little gathered rose would fade,  
For thus the roses are.

Alas, that any lover knows  
A wearier way to meet,  
Than he might bear a gathered rose  
Still virginal and sweet, —

Than for her sprigs the nightingale  
Goes on her nesting flight,  
Or sends upon the wind her tale  
Of sorrow through the night.

## THE NEW LOVE

EDUARD MÖRIKE

(1804-1875)

Is man unto another wholly given,  
Though man should will it so?  
In watchful nights I sought the word, and still  
the word was no.

By none possessed, and as a stranger driven  
From hearts I could not know —  
Lamenting thus, a sudden sign was on my lips,  
and lo!

I said, 'May God and I not go,  
In daily tenderness to grow,  
As lovers from this moment even?'

Ah! fearful joy to gather, and bestow, —  
A waif of love no more to travel to and fro,  
But walk with God on earth, foretasting  
heaven.

## PRAYER

EDUARD MÖRIKE  
(1804-1875)

LORD, as thou wilt, bestow,  
Light ease or heavy bearing,  
Still shall my day be sharing  
Thy bounty's overflow.

Thy mercy oppress me;  
Thy temperance bless me;  
Lord, sternly or sweetly,  
Employ me discreetly,  
That peace may possess me.

## THE LAST TREE

FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

(1813-1863)

ON heaven's rim, when day is done,  
There is a lone last tree,  
That gathers from the setting sun  
A morning memory.

And when at night my dues I pay  
For sunny hours, I find  
The tree that held the dying day  
Transfigured in my mind.

So you renew my glory gone,  
And as I turn to age  
My youth in you sets out upon  
Eternal pilgrimage. ..

## TO HIS DEAD WIFE

THEODOR STORM

(1817-1888)

HERE is too black a grief for bearing,  
That still the sun makes golden time,  
And day to night is still a-wearing,  
That as when you with us were faring  
The clocks tick and the steeples chime;

That when the candle-time is here  
We gather still in household grace,  
And nothing seems to miss you, dear,  
Though where you sat so many a year  
Another chair is in the place;

While I know the moon is weaving  
Now her thin and lonely beams  
To the vault of my bereaving,  
Desolate, as is my grieving,  
On a tomb of ghostly dreams.

## A WOMAN'S HAND

THEODOR STORM

(1817-1888)

NEVER, I know, complaining word  
Will soil your lips of stedfastness,  
But what so bravely is unheard,  
Your hand in silence will confess;

Your hand, poor witness of your pain,  
Its fragile motion telling me  
Of weary nights when it has lain  
Upon your heart's adversity.



## HEART'S PROVING

GOTTFRIED KELLER

(1819-1890)

Do not my undesigning heart disdain  
That it so many hearts has fellowed,  
In this it is but as a fiddle mellowed  
Long by a master in desire and pain;

And year by year under his cunning hand  
Its common price has interest taken,  
For now the strings to deeper tones will  
    waken  
For any player who may understand.

So, many a mistress on my heart has spent  
Instruction of her fancy's choosing,  
Till it is worthy your diviner using —  
Fail not its music to our discontent.

## CONTENT WAS FULL

DETLEV VON LILIENCRON

(1844-1909)

WHEN softly to my arms you came,  
Your even pulse unbroken,  
Till on your sleeping lips my name  
In sunny peace was spoken,  
Content was full.

And when at eve you snared away  
My discontent and sorrow,  
While I within your bosom lay,  
All guarded from the morrow,  
Content was full.

## SONG

HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

(b. 1874)

My lady said, 'I'll be no chain,  
You are not sworn to me,  
To pledge the faith of men is vain,  
They are inconstancy.'

'My friend, go on your way,' she said,  
'Divining many a land,  
Taking your ease in many a bed,  
Caressing many a hand.'

'If bitter wine your cup may fill,  
Then try the Malvoisie,  
But if my lips are sweeter still,'  
She said, 'come back to me.'

## EPILOGUE: THE GERMAN MUSE

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

(1759-1805)

HERE no age Augustan flourished,  
No Medician bounty nourished  
    Children of the German muse;  
Still by privilege unfriended  
Her unfolding flower was tended  
    By no princely beams or dews.

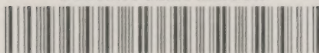
In the pride of German story  
See her, scant of wage or glory,  
    Turning from great Frederick's throne;  
So the German muse may pride her —  
When the sceptred world denied her  
    By her soul she sang alone.

Mounting thence a higher passion,  
Tided in a deeper fashion,  
    Sweeps the German muse along,  
And singing that she may inherit  
But her own abundant spirit,  
    Mocks the servitude of song.





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